

## **Controlling Gestational Diabetes\***

Only pregnant women get gestational diabetes. Controlling it can help you have a healthy pregnancy and childbirth.

### **What is gestational diabetes?**

Gestational diabetes is a type of diabetes that occurs in women while they are pregnant. When you have diabetes, your body's blood sugar level is too high. This means your body does not make or use insulin the way it should. Insulin is a hormone that helps get blood sugar to your cells. The body needs blood sugar for energy.

Gestational diabetes:

- Affects about 5 percent of all pregnant women.
- Often begins in the fifth or sixth month of pregnancy (weeks 24 and 28) and usually goes away right after childbirth. Some women who get gestational diabetes are at higher risk for type 2 diabetes in later years.
- Affects the way your body stores sugar, your body's main source of fuel.

### **How does gestational diabetes affect your baby?**

Your baby may:

- Get more energy than it needs. The extra energy is then stored as fat.
- Be born very large.
- Have breathing problems.
- Have low blood sugar level at birth.

### **What can you do if you have gestational diabetes?**

- Have your blood checked on a regular basis.
- Exercise. It helps the body's insulin work better to help control blood sugar levels.
- Maintain a healthy weight gain.
- Go to all your prenatal visits.
- Follow the treatment plan your doctor gives you.
- Keep a log book. Write down what you eat, the workouts you do, and your blood sugar level each day. Show your log to your doctor at each visit.



## Make healthy food choices.

- Eat smaller amounts of complex carbs (carbohydrates) such as pasta, brown rice, grains, cereals, crackers, bread, potatoes, dried beans and peas.
- Eat fiber-rich foods such as whole grain cereals and breads, fruits and vegetables.
- Before you go to bed, eat a healthy snack that has protein and carbs. Try peanut butter, fruit, pretzels and crackers.
- Avoid saturated fats such as fatty meats, butter, bacon, cream and whole milk cheeses.
- Avoid sugar and foods high in sugar.
- Ask your doctor or dietitian if you have questions.

## Work with your team for a healthy pregnancy.

Gestational diabetes can be serious. But you, your provider and your health care team can work together to prevent and control it. With healthy habits, you can have a healthy pregnancy. If you need more information, call us. Also, you can go to the health topics section of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/>.

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Source: \*Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development, *What Is Gestational Diabetes?* (Accessed August 2009): [http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/gest\\_diabetes/sub1.cfm?renderforprint+1](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/gest_diabetes/sub1.cfm?renderforprint+1)

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